



CULTURE



**THE LEARNED AND SHARED
BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS
OF A GROUP THAT HAVE BEEN
TRANSMITTED FROM
GENERATION TO GENERATION
THROUGH A SHARED SYMBOL
SYSTEM.**



SUBCULTURE



A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITHIN A LARGER SOCIAL STRUCTURE WHO SHARE CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE DIFFERENT ENOUGH TO DISTINGUISH THEM FROM OTHERS WITHIN THE SAME SOCIETY.



ENCULTURATION



**THE PASSING OF CULTURE -
THAT IS SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE
BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES -
FROM THE OLDER TO
YOUNGER MEMBERS OF A
GROUP.**



ATTRIBUTES OF CULTURE



- **LANGUAGE / SYMBOLS**
- **VALUES**
- **BELIEFS**
- **PATTERNS OF THINKING**
- **CUSTOMARY BEHAVIORS**



INNATE ATTRIBUTES



- **RACE**
- **GENETICS**
- **ETHNICITY**



IMPLICATIONS OF CROSS-CULTURE INTERACTIONS



- **LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES**
- **BEING BLUNT**
- **PUBLIC DOCUMENTS**
- **CUSTOMS, OBSERVANCES, & NECESSITIES**
- **SUPERVISORS/SUBORDINATE RELATIONS**
- **SOCIAL AND SUPPORT GROUPS**



PITFALLS OF CROSS-CULTURE INTERACTIONS



- **STEREOTYPING**
- **ASSUMPTIONS**
- **DIFFERENCES**



MUSLIM NATIONS



Enforce religious laws forbidding or limiting:

- Alcohol consumption**
- Freedom of religion and speech**
- Women's rights**
- Pornography**



KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING KUWAIT AND SAUDI CULTURE



- **Importance of time**
- **Relationship of the individual to society**



IMPORTANCE OF TIME



- ***Inshallah* means “If God Wills”**
 - In other words, they express good intention, but leave a way out.
- **Humans cannot control all events**
 - Some things depend on God and fate.



RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIETY



- A person's dignity, honor, and reputation are of paramount importance.
- They often view honor and shame as collective, i.e., pertaining to the entire group or family.
- It is important to always act in a manner that will make a good impression on others.
- Loyalty to family takes precedence over personal needs.
- Social class and family background are the major determinants of one's personal status.
- The next most important are individual character and achievement.



BELIEFS AND VALUES



- Basic Arab Self-Perceptions:
 - Everyone believes in God, acknowledges His power, and has some religious affiliation.
 - Devotion to God is one of the most admirable characteristics in a person.
 - There should be no separation between church and state.
 - Established religious beliefs and practices are important and they reject liberal interpretations that threaten them.



FRIENDS & STRANGERS



- The Concept of Friendship:
 - Friendships start and develop quickly.
 - Not just those people whose company they enjoy, but also have a duty to give help and grant favors.
- Introductions
 - Quickly determine social status.
 - Give a considerable amount of information about themselves and their family.
 - “influence networking” (Westerners pay attention – a great way to establish contacts!).



FRIENDS & STRANGERS (CONT)



- Personal Friendships
 - Should see each other often.
 - Value conversation and long discussions.
 - Will extend many invitations – while it is acceptable not to maintain them at the same pace, it is considered rude for Westerners not to reciprocate.



FRIENDS & STRANGERS (CONT)



- Business Friendships
 - Do not operate well as merely “business colleagues”
 - Prefer a lot of outside socialization
 - A good personal relationship = successful business.
 - Set aside a few minutes for light conversation at the beginning of meetings
 - Westerners should wait for them to switch to business



FRIENDS & STRANGERS (CONT)



- Noncommittal answers are a common complaint made by Westerners.
 - A positive response is merely a declaration of intention and an expression of goodwill.
- “*Do this for my sake*” attached to a request for a favor implies indebtedness.



FRIENDS & STRANGERS (CONT)



- Criticism
 - There are no words in Arabic meaning “constructive criticism” – they take all criticism very personally, so it is important to phrase it carefully.
 - Do not give criticism in front of others.
 - Begin with the good points and be sure to include your high regard for them as an individual.



FRIENDS & STRANGERS (CONT)



- Intermediaries
 - *Wafta* refers to a person with influence who serves to represent another.
 - In situations of conflict, it is particularly important to utilize an intermediary for whom the person you are in conflict with will hold in high regard.
- Reciprocal Favors
 - Never openly refuse a friend's request.
 - Oral promise has its own value as a response.



FRIENDS & STRANGERS (CONT)



- Reciprocal Favors Example:
 - Situation - An Egyptian did a favor for a Western professor working in Egypt (**finding him an apartment, etc**). Later, he called on the professor for help in getting a graduate fellowship. The professor replied that there was no point in trying, because the Egyptian's grades were not high enough to be competitive.
 - Solution - By Arab practice, the professor should have made helpful gestures, such as researching schools. The Egyptian would have graciously accepted the professor's regrets when he did not get a fellowship, because the professor would have at least shown an acknowledgment of their friendship.



GETTING PERSONAL



- On the whole, most Westerners feel that Arabs get too personal, too quickly.
- **Personal Questions**
 - Arabs like to discuss money, including questions about salary.
 - If unmarried or childless, Arabs might openly ask why.
- **Sensitive Subjects**
 - Two favorite Arab topics of conversation are religion and politics.
- ***NOTE: Both can be risky.***



GESTURES



- Men use gestures more than women.
- Less educated people use gestures more than well-educated people.
- Moving the head slightly back and raising eyebrows = **no**.
- Moving the head back and chin up = **no**.
- Moving chin back slightly and making a clicking sound with the tongue means = **no**.
- After shaking hands, placing the right hand to the heart or chest means respect or sincerity.



GESTURES (CONT)



- Right hand out, palm downward, and move as if brushing something away = **go away**.
- Right hand out, palm downward, moving it up and down slowly = **quiet down**.
- Right hand out, palm upward, and opening and closing = **come here**.
- Right hand out, palm upward, closing hand half-way and holding it = **give it to me**.



GESTURES (CONT)



- Right hand out, palm upward, touching thumb and fingertips together and moving hand up and down = **calm down; be patient.**
- Right hand out, palm downward, then quickly twisting the hand to be palm upward = **What? Why?**
- Holding right forefinger up and moving it from left to right quickly several times = **never.**
- Thumbs up with right hand = **very good; I am winning.**